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CALL FOR INDIVIDUAL EXPERT

Consultancy Mission for supporting the Higher Council Innovation and Excellence to develop a National Innovation Strategy in Palestine

Innovation plays a crucial role in the economic and social development. It is an important driver of growth, productivity, competitiveness, and job creation. Innovation can also help addressing some of the socioeconomic challenges like health and poverty.

But to do so, a strategy must be established at country level to path the way, set-up objectives, strategic priorities, and detailing the organization of the means to achieve them.

A specific innovation policy is in fact largely determined by the nature of its ecosystem and the national challenges it wishes to address. While there is no single definition of a modern innovation framework program, each country having its own priorities, there are nevertheless generally five groups of issues related to innovation to be included in such a strategy: education and training - including through the diaspora -, research and development, business climate and the private sector, the regulatory framework for innovation and, finally, support for innovators themselves¹.

The purpose of this consultancy mission is to support the creation of a national innovation strategy in Palestine to guide decisions on the use of resources, optimize the coordination of innovation stakeholders and address the challenges and priorities listed according to the framework already established by the Higher Council Innovation and Excellence (HCIE).

Taking into account the prevailing regulatory environment, and the particularities of the country, the consultant will have to support the HCIE in reviewing its own innovation policy as well as the "General Framework for a national strategy for innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship" that currently exists. He/she will also be in charge to design programs that would allow to implement this strategy by assigning roles and responsibilities within the ecosystem.

¹ "Innovation Policy for Inclusive Sustainable Development in the Arab Region", ESCWA

Technical & financial specifications

Background information on THE NEXT SOCIETY

THE NEXT SOCIETY is an open community of changemakers, entrepreneurs, investors, corporates, NGOs, public and private innovation, research and economic development hubs from Europe and 7 Mediterranean countries: Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia.

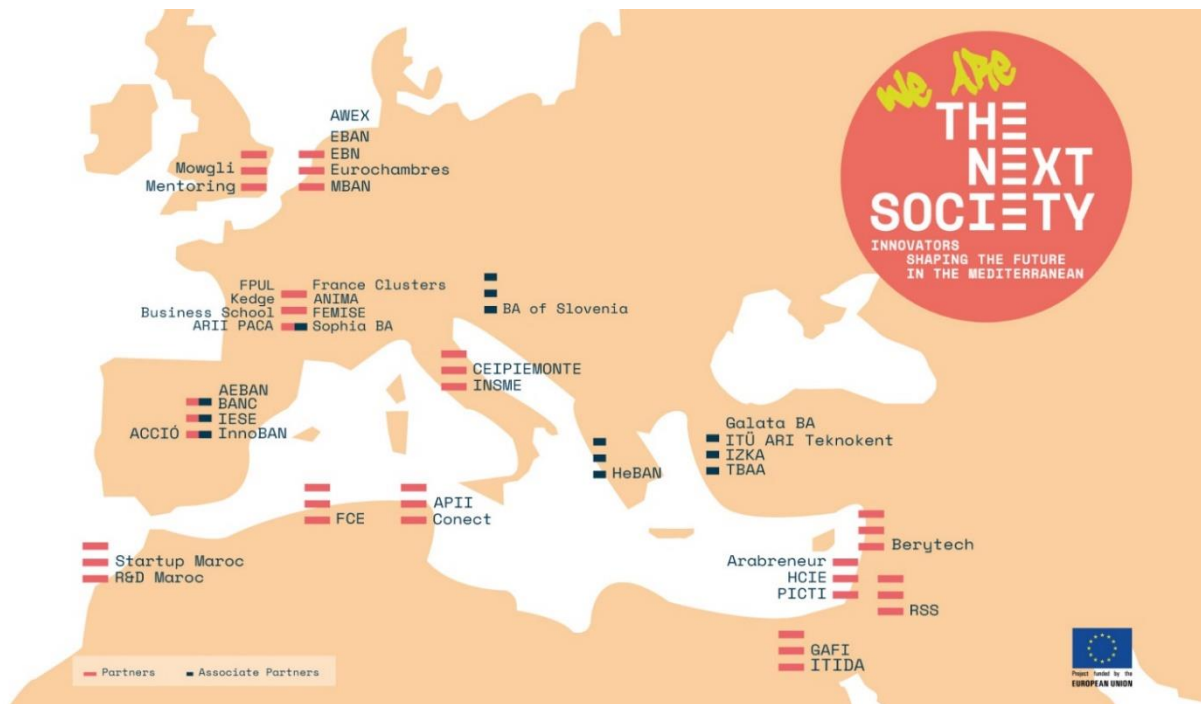
It aims at **mobilising, promoting and reinforcing innovation ecosystems** and economic development in the MENA region.

To reach these goals, THE NEXT SOCIETY supports the emergence of talents and innovative leaders who will drive the next trends and usages by targeting start-ups, clusters and technology transfer offices to accompany their development.

Launched by ANIMA Investment Network and 30 partners, **THE NEXT SOCIETY** has launched **a four-year action plan (2017-2020), co-funded by the European Union** up to 90% for a global amount of EUR 7.8 million, which impacts 4 levels of the innovation ecosystems:

1. Improve **policy frameworks**: THE NEXT SOCIETY establishes a public-private dialogue and benchmarks Mediterranean innovation ecosystems in order to design and implement country strategic roadmaps and improve innovation support strategies.
2. Foster **start-up** successes: THE NEXT SOCIETY offers tailor-made support to Mediterranean start-ups to help them go international and raise funds thanks to tailor-made services: innovators academies, mentoring, soft landing, bootcamps, international business development missions and power dinners with investors. Download the [Start-up Booster Track](#) brochure.
3. Promote and internationalise **clusters**. THE NEXT SOCIETY develops peer-learning services for business and industrial clusters as well as foreign partnerships and guides them towards a Cluster Excellence management approach. Download the [Cluster Booster Track](#) brochure.
4. Accelerating **technology transfer** towards the enterprise. THE NEXT SOCIETY involves technology transfer offices, universities, researchers and creators to develop solutions to the challenges faced by their countries, through calls for projects and workshops with potential users of these solutions (large international firms, industry leaders, investors, entrepreneurs, civil society). Download the [TTO Booster Track](#) brochure.

For more information, please visit [THE NEXT SOCIETY website](#).



Technical assistance mission

Context of innovation

There is no innovation strategy in Palestine but a national framework to support MSMEs was developed with the International Labour Organisation support in 2010. As governmental support, a “National Development Plan” mainly focused on private sector growth in the strategic sectors of agriculture, tourism and ICT has been deployed between 2011 and 2013.

To fill this gap, President of Palestine established in 2012 the Higher Council for Innovation and Excellence (HCIE), a new public initiative acting like an umbrella which coordinates the national innovation actors of the ecosystem. Among other missions, the HCIE aims at providing legal, stimulating and supportive environment for innovation and creativity, and cooperating with the concerned parties in preparing drafts of legislations relating to the innovation and excellence. As part of its Innovation policy, the HCIE set up a General Framework for a national strategy for innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship. Through this framework, the institution intends to move Palestine to a new stage *“in which the culture of innovation between individuals and emerging businesses will be built and established at the core of its activities, with a focus on a number of trends that will guide the process of innovation in the future.”* Such framework currently relies on three pillars: i. an enabling environment for innovation (regulatory framework, support services, technological infrastructure, investment and incentives), ii. Pioneers of innovation (innovative individuals, innovative companies and institutions, government), iii. sectors that lead innovation.

But according to the Mediterranean-specific scoreboard set up by FEMISE for THE NEXT SOCIETY², Palestine remains generally bad ranked compared to the other countries of the

² Scoreboard available online: <https://www.thenextsociety.co/i-data>.

region (except Algeria). Indeed, the country faces same challenges as most of the MENA countries, but it also suffers from isolation, geographic division and recurrent political unrests and tensions around the borders. Political stability and government efficiency are also lower than the regional average.

The innovation is definitely driven by ICT sector in Palestine. This sector is in relatively good health due to the low cost of investment in this field. Under the impulsion of the Palestine IT Association (PITA) founded in 1999 by a group of Palestinian entrepreneurs to lead the ICT sector towards an innovation-based economy, the very first start-ups began to be created alongside the major ICT companies in Palestine's emerging technology gathered by PITA.

The start-ups ecosystem in the West Bank and Gaza is an early stage ecosystem past its nascent growth phase but still far from maturity. On average, each year, 19 more start-ups are created than in the previous year, resulting in a 34 percent compounded growth rate in start-up creation since 2009.³ The key strengths of the ecosystem are the presence of talented people, with highly educated founders (85 percent of them having a university degree and 27 percent with graduate degrees) and the connection with international networks of knowledge (primarily through international universities and accelerator programs).

The supporting infrastructure (accelerators, mentors) and the community is still maturing. Accelerator programs neither generate quantity nor quality of start-ups with many of them being supported by external funding programs, suggesting a need to improve the quality of these programs. Capacity building efforts and the professionalization of accelerators represent therefore priorities in strengthening the ecosystem.

Investment seems sufficient for the scale of the ecosystem, with a quite large pool of angel investors. On institutional investment, VC funds report not being able to meet their targets because of limitations of a quality pipeline. On the other hand, the international connectivity of the ecosystem allows those investment-ready start-ups in the West Bank and Gaza to also look for funding in the region and abroad.

R&D expenditure reached 61.4 million in 2015⁴, that is 0.5 of Palestine GDP Gross Domestic Product in 2015, which is very low compared to many other Arab countries. This low value is related to the inadequate financial resources and weakness of interest and awareness on the importance of R&D as a major lever for the economy by different parties.

Overall published documents and number of citations are lower than the regional average. In Palestine, West Bank and Gaza Strip don't have the same IP jurisprudence. Gaza Strip adopted Palestinian trademark and patent laws of 1938, while West Bank adopted the Jordanian laws.

Yet, despite an ecosystem that can be qualified of still "advancing", Palestine is keen to use technology and innovative solutions to address some of the challenges daily faced by the country. This is for example the first country in MENA to utilize scenario modelling within their systematic, urban policy, and development practices⁵. This activity demonstrates that despite highly constrained environments within fragile and conflict affected areas, innovative planning tools can be used to support urban planning and the delivery of public services to citizens.

³ "The Tech Startup Ecosystem in the West Bank and Gaza", World Bank.

⁴ According to the Scoreboard THE NEXT SOCIETY.

⁵ Urban Innovation in Palestinian Cities, the Integrated Cities and Urban Development (ICUD) Project, World Bank.

Work initiated by THE NEXT SOCIETY

The technical assistance mission is conducted as a follow-up of the public-private dialogue conducted during advocacy panel meetings taking place in Palestine within THE NEXT SOCIETY.

Acting as a Task Force at national level, the objective of Advocacy Panels organised within the initiative is to oversee innovation roadmap formulation, its implementation, evaluation and update, with the objective of strengthen the national Innovation system, foster coordination among actors involved and improve concrete instruments of the innovation policy. This panel is composed of Palestine private sector representatives and investors, innovation stakeholders, relevant Ministries and their agencies, the Office of the European Union Representative to Palestine as well as academic experts.

The First advocacy panel held in December 2017 identified several issues to be tackled to reinforce the Palestine innovation ecosystem. Among them were mentioned:

- The lack of pro-active and incentivist Policy like a “Buy Palestine” Act
- The lack of efficient national coordination among innovation stakeholders
- Improvement of the IP Policy scheme
- Limited access to foreign technology
- Business Support Organisation labelling
- Funding for Technology Transfer: prototyping, patents, launch on market

Following this first meeting, a new advocacy panel held in March 2019 intended to go further in identifying priorities on which THE NEXT SOCIETY will provide an expertise. This time, panel’s members identified 4 main issues to be tackled to reinforce the Palestinian innovation ecosystem:

1. Preparing a national innovation strategy
2. Developing an effective networking mechanism among stakeholders to boost innovation
3. Reform of the legal and bureaucratic frameworks in Palestine to enable the development of innovation and entrepreneurship
4. Infrastructure development for innovation and R&D activities

Working on the development of a national strategy for innovation appeared like the most urgent issue and the panel collectively agreed to focus on this priority and to be committed to do so under the coordination of HCIE.

Following, a national team for the preparation of the national strategy for innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship was formed by HCIE from the representatives of the national government, private sector, academia, and civil society organizations.

A first meeting of this national team was held in September 2019, where a first draft of the General Framework for a national strategy for innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship was presented and discussed. The team reworked it in view of receiving an international expert through THE NEXT SOCIETY to assist in the preparation of the National strategy and to assist in providing technical expertise during the mission.

With this objective in mind, HCIE requested all members of the team

- to study the strategies of their own institutions and extract any elements related to the subject of innovation and creativity in their status and/or mandate
- to prepare a description of the role of their institutions towards this subject and make adjustment recommendations if necessary.

Format and objectives of the mission

This call is open for any expert with extended knowledge in the field of innovation, with demonstrated expertise in innovation regulatory environment, and with a deep understanding of the Palestinian ecosystem.

The assignment is to work with HCIE to review the “General Framework for innovation that currently exists, develop an innovation strategy and design programs that would allow to implement this strategy including the following components:

- report on relevant regulations, highlighting those in need of development
- highlight relevant synergies and gaps in the ecosystem
- reflect on global best practice
- suggest designs of at least 2 programs to achieve the global goal of this mission
- present the outcomes as a report including all the above

Activities that must be carried out:

- Review of the innovation policy of the HCIE and plans implemented since establishment.
- Review the General Framework for a National Strategy for Innovation, Creativity and Entrepreneurship set up by HCIE.
- Desk review of regulatory environment and ecosystem mapping;
- Desk review of existing reports and studies developed on MENA innovation strategies.
- Identification of specific roles for the key players in the entrepreneurship and innovation ecosystem and other champions or stakeholders in influencing the implementation of the program and activities at national level.
- Identification and analysing of existing initiatives that support innovation.
- Interviews with top innovation actors
- design of mechanisms for implementation of the strategy and stakeholder’s responsibilities based on all of the above.

Collaborative framework

The mission will start as soon as the global health context allows the development of activities. For its whole duration, the experts will work in close collaboration with HCIE and more widely with the stakeholders of the Palestine innovation ecosystem of the ad’ hoc team set-up.

Deliverables of the mission

- A revised General Framework for the National Strategy for Innovation based on the Draft prepared by HCIE
- A technical assistance mission report in view of the National strategy, that includes:
 - o Relevant ecosystem mapping
 - o Relevant regulatory instruments (in close relationship with HCIE work with several ministries)
 - o Examples of best practices
- Development of new programs with suggested mechanisms, KPIs, and governance including:
 - o Presentation document for the Launch of the National Innovation Strategy during a National Workshop
 - o Role and responsibilities of stakeholders
 - o Articulation with existing or in development regulatory instruments

The report should be delivered on 10 February 2021 the latest. The consultant will present mission outcomes during the Advocacy Panel meeting of THE NEXT SOCIETY at the occasion of the National Workshop planned to be held before the end of first quarter 2021. These deadlines will be confirmed when establishing the engagement letter according to the global COVID-19 situation.

Budget & payment conditions

The budget allocated for the entire mission must include all necessary mission costs.

HCIE management team will proceed to the payment of the estimated costs the latest 2 months after completion of the action and the validation of its deliverables.

Selection Criteria & Process

Profile of the expert(s)

The expert should fulfil the following criteria:

- At least 10 years of experience in innovation and technology field (mandatory) and practices acquired as entrepreneur and/or investor and/or consultant
- At least 3 years of experience in the Palestine innovation ecosystem
- Demonstrated expertise in innovation regulatory environment
- Proficiency in Arabic is strongly desirable.

Application & selection process

Applications should include:



- A detailed resume highlighting the expert experience in the fields relevant to the expertise mission
- A technical offer including a description of the methodology used, main milestones and implementation steps as well as an estimate of the time spent on each task;
- A financial offer (days and costs in person days).

Deadline : Applications should be sent to THE NEXT SOCIETY coordination team on the following email address: welcome@thenextsociety.co before December 1st, 2020.